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Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007

Enhancing the role of the subregional offices of the Economic Commission for Africa*

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to the request contained in paragraph 12 of General Assembly resolution 60/235 that the Secretary-General, inter alia, submit a comprehensive plan of action to strengthen the subregional offices of the Economic Commission for Africa based on the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services. The present report outlines the plan and provides the timelines and clear lines of managerial accountability that will ensure full implementation of the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

* The delay in submission was caused by the time taken to complete the extensive consultations required within the Secretariat and with the Member States and the regional economic communities.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 60/235, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to present to its sixty-first session a comprehensive plan of action to strengthen the subregional offices of the Economic Commission for Africa. The request was made in response to a report on an inspection of the programmes and administrative management of the subregional offices undertaken by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) (A/60/120).

2. Within the context of the new global and African realities, which entail both new challenges and new opportunities for the subregional offices, the OIOS report outlined a number of important findings and conclusions that could form the cornerstone of possible reforms enhancing the role of the subregional offices. Among other things, OIOS found that:

(a) The subregional offices are a vital part of the Economic Commission for Africa and their role as subregional outposts is very important;

(b) The mandate of the subregional offices as the operational arms of the Commission, as facilitators of subregional economic cooperation and integration and as centres for policy dialogue is only partially fulfilled;

(c) The mandated core functions of the subregional offices are not supported by adequate resources, thus requiring the strengthening of their operational resources;

(d) The role of the subregional offices is unclear, their visibility and outreach in the subregions are limited, and their support to regional economic communities varies greatly in scope and effectiveness;

(e) Initiative, flexibility and multidisciplinary teamwork should be promoted;

(f) The impact of subregional offices could be enhanced through:

(i) More focused programming of their activities;

(ii) Creative dissemination of information, emphasizing electronic space and thus requiring the scaling-up of their information and communication technology capacities;

(iii) Aligning their staff expertise and skills with subregional priorities;

(iv) Reliable mechanisms of cooperation and coordination between subregional offices and between them and Commission headquarters.

3. The Office made 14 recommendations for action on a wide range of issues, all aimed at strengthening the capacity of subregional offices to deliver programmes, improve coordination and collaboration between them and Commission divisions, energize their outreach and enhance their value for United Nations development agencies.

4. In early 2006, the new Executive Secretary of the Commission conducted a comprehensive review of the Commission with a view to repositioning the organization to better respond to the challenges facing Africa. The outcome of that review was considered and endorsed by the thirty-ninth session of the Commission/Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development

at its annual meeting held in Ouagadougou in May 2006. The ministerial statement adopted on that occasion stated: "We also support the proposal to strengthen ECA subregional offices. We trust that such reform will enable ECA, working with its partners, to better assist African countries to meet their economic and social development challenges, including that of employment generation."[1] In resolution 844 (XXXIX), the ministers invited the Secretary-General to support the efforts of the Commission's renewal and reform process by providing the Commission, including its subregional offices, with adequate resources in order to scale up their operations both at the subregional and regional levels.

5. The Executive Secretary's review confirmed that, in consideration of the agenda of the African Union Commission, as well as from the perspective of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the subregional offices are among the most important instruments available to the Commission to enable it to make meaningful contributions to efforts aimed at meeting Africa's challenges. The review also confirmed that in order for the subregional offices to play their role effectively, within the overall exercise for repositioning the Commission, action must be taken in a number of key areas in the overall functioning of the subregional offices. Their mandate and mission must be refocused. Their products and services should be better designed. Their delivery model must be revamped. Their modalities should be improved through enhanced partnerships, and their resource base and use of information and communication technologies significantly strengthened.

6. The OIOS recommendations and the review of the Commission's repositioning point to pivotal and strategic reforms and actions that need to be implemented to make the subregional offices effective subregional operational nodes of a repositioned Commission. It is in this context that the present action plan has been formulated. Annex I to the present document outlines the present and proposed organizational structures of the Commission, together with a table that summarizes the staffing deployments in the subregional offices. In annex II to the present document, the recommendations of OIOS are further considered in the light of the actions to be taken to implement them, the responsibility centres and the timelines for implementation. Both annexes form an integral part of the action plan.

II. New strategic directions for the subregional offices

A. Refocused mandate and mission

7. The mandate of the subregional offices derives *ab initio* from the Commission's mandate, which is to promote the economic and social development of Africa. The exercise to reposition the Commission has established that, while the mandate of the Commission remains relevant, its mission must take account of Africa's current context and priorities, which are defined by the establishment of the African Union (AU) and the adoption of NEPAD. The AU vision, as well as NEPAD and its associated African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), are all based on the promotion of Africa's integration and development from a subregional perspective. The regional economic communities themselves are understood to be both the foundations and building blocks of the African Economic Community. It is to be

[1] See E/ECA/CM.39/9/Rev.1, para. 31.

able to respond to this subregional paradigm that the Commission, in repositioning itself as a more action-oriented institution, will put major emphasis on ensuring a markedly stronger presence at the subregional level.

8. The first step in enhancing the role of subregional offices is to more clearly define their mandate so as to define the core roles they are expected to play to ensure the attainment of the desired results and impact in their respective subregions. In this regard, it is pertinent to first recall some of the weaknesses identified by OIOS in respect of the capacity of the subregional offices to fulfil their mandate. While the most important weaknesses relate to the mismatch between resources and the mandate, two other weaknesses are structural and can be addressed by a clearer definition of the roles subregional offices are expected to play, namely (a) the lack of clarity regarding the balance between the operational and analytical roles of subregional offices; and (b) the absence of discernable impact of subregional offices as facilitators of the integration activities of organizations of the United Nations system in the subregions.

9. A refocused mission for the subregional offices will therefore be based on achieving the right balance between their operational and analytical roles and enabling them to play a more dynamic role in the integration of their respective subregions. Taking these factors into account, the new mission of the subregional offices will include the following:

(a) Taking the lead in shaping the Commission's agenda and implementing it at the subregional level: the subregional offices will have a more direct role at the subregional level by being the first port of call to Commission headquarters for the regional economic communities and member States. They will also spearhead the delivery of operational activities and act as the Commission's implementing arm in the various subregions. In this regard, subregional offices will sign multi-year programming agreements with regional economic communities that reflect the priorities of their member States. Moreover, in the Commission's new multidisciplinary approach to problem definition and solving, subregional offices will provide guidance to the Commission's strategic planning services and mobilize its competencies for capacity-building and concerted subregional responses to major international development agendas;

(b) Promoting and supporting specific subregional priorities and programmes: the lead role of subregional offices will translate into specific strategic and sectoral areas of focus stemming from subregional specificities. The subregional offices will accordingly work closely with regional economic communities to identify and promote one or two subregional initiatives and programmes based on established priorities and build consensus around them. The focus of such subregional initiatives will be relevance, synergy and impact. Each subregional office will therefore concentrate on the priority sectors for the subregion and will be provided with human and financial resources to enable it to make a useful contribution in such areas. If required, subregional offices could promote and support special subregional initiatives in specific circumstances such as post-conflict or peacebuilding situations;

(c) Operating as subregional nodes for knowledge management and networking: the repositioning of the Commission in order for it to properly manage and disseminate knowledge requires that the subregional offices be similarly enabled to operate as nodes in its knowledge management and networking activities.

This will entail their playing an active role in the various subregions to capture, evaluate, synthesize, organize, distribute and apply knowledge to complement similar activities at headquarters while promoting the formation of networks of experts and institutions. As such, subregional offices will operate as subregional knowledge management and exchange centres, including by collecting data and other relevant development information and disseminating them among member countries and development partners. To this end, subregional offices will be the points of entry for the Commission's support to member countries for the establishment and strengthening of their statistical services;

(d) Coordinating United Nations system activities for subregional integration: to support the ongoing reform of the United Nations, the subregional offices shall play a lead role at the subregional level in coordinating the programmes and activities of the United Nations agencies, thus bringing this perspective to the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) framework. This will imply working closely with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in this area. The subregional offices will build synergies and cooperation at this level between the various United Nations agencies while drawing upon the strong regional presence of the Commission, including its wide-ranging technical skills and convening power. Such cooperation will entail efforts to enhance joint programming of work at the subregional level and the possibility of a coordination framework at the subregional level similar to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework at the country level.

B. Improved products and services

10. One of the major limitations of the subregional offices, as they currently function, is the lack of clarity in the services that they are expected to provide. Instead of trying to replicate the full range of services being produced at Commission headquarters, the subregional offices will now play a more active role in:

(a) Advisory services and technical cooperation: subregional offices will support regional economic communities in developing capacity to design appropriate integration policies and in building capabilities to implement resulting programmes and projects. Such advisory services are to be demand-driven, based on the requirements and specificities of each subregion, and will therefore vary for each subregional office. In this regard, subregional offices will shift away from analytical work towards assisting member States and regional economic communities to operationalize the ideas generated at Commission headquarters. The main vehicle for the delivery of such technical cooperation would be a multi-year programming agreement to be elaborated between the subregional offices and regional economic communities;

(b) Knowledge-sharing and networking: the repositioned Commission will foster the generation and sharing of knowledge products from within the Commission and from other partners on critical development issues. The subregional offices will accordingly serve as conduits for the dissemination of such knowledge, especially the flagship publications, demand-driven studies, policy papers and monographs on specific topics. In the same context, subregional offices will organize subregional workshops aimed at sharing knowledge and building

networks of stakeholders on specific subregional and continental initiatives, which will also be complemented by the use of electronic space. The knowledge-sharing function of subregional offices will also include providing feedback to Commission headquarters from regional economic communities, member States and other stakeholders on the quality and relevance of its knowledge-related products;

(c) Advocacy and consensus-building: subregional offices will contribute to the consensus-building activities of the Commission by serving as platforms for the articulation of common positions at the subregional level, which would in turn underpin coordination and coherence among member States. In this regard, it will be proposed that the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts of each subregional office be converted to subregional ministerial meetings and convened in conjunction with meetings of the policy organs of relevant regional economic communities, while ministerial caucuses of each subregional office will also be held at the margins of the Commission's Conference of Ministers meeting.

C. Expected results

11. The outcomes expected from a realignment of the mandate of the subregional offices and an improved delivery model are inextricably linked to the two new pillars of the Commission's work, which is to support the process of regional integration in the continent and assist its member States to meet their current challenges. In particular, subregional offices would be expected to contribute to:

(a) Visible improvements in the programme outputs of regional economic communities: with the increased focus of subregional offices on subregional priorities, they will be expected to contribute to visible improvements in the programme outputs of the relevant regional economic community. This would include the specification and adoption of multi-year programmes to be signed between subregional offices and their corresponding regional economic communities, which should be coherent across sectors and consistent with the capacities and needs of each subregion;

(b) Positive policy contributions at the subregional level: closer collaboration between the regional economic communities on one hand and subregional offices and other partners on the other should bring about positive contributions to policymaking in the various subregions. This would include, for instance, ideas for capacity-building and improving regional integration processes, including maximizing the benefits of regional public goods;

(c) Identification and implementation of specific sectoral initiatives in the subregions: one of the key outcomes of improved engagement between subregional offices and their respective regional economic communities is the identification of specific sectoral initiatives in accordance with subregional priorities. The expectation is that closer collaboration would lead to the initiation or re-examination of subregional programmes and projects that will broaden and deepen the process of integration. Subregional offices would also be expected to promote and support the process of implementation, drawing on the technical expertise and networks of the Commission;

(d) Enhanced capacities at the subregional level: it is expected that the activities and service delivery of refocused subregional offices will lead to enhanced

capacities by the regional economic communities to initiate, implement, monitor and evaluate programme delivery in their respective subregions. At the initial stage, this will mean an improvement in the institutional capacities in the secretariats of the regional economic communities, which should in turn filter down to other stakeholders involved in regional integration processes in the respective subregions.

The foregoing expected results compare with the expected accomplishments in the revised biennial programme plan for subprogramme 7, which is included in annex II to the present document in response to OIOS Recommendation SP-04-002-002.

III. A new institutional governance framework for the subregional offices

12. The OIOS report observed that the impact of the intergovernmental committees of experts that govern the subregional offices is limited. The committees of the five offices meet annually at the expert level. They submit their reports to the Commission's Conference of Ministers. Problems cited by OIOS regarding the committees included the following:

(a) The committees mainly comprise the middle level of national management and the outcomes of their deliberations are not guaranteed to reach appropriate national and subregional political levels;

(b) There is no continuous and reliable interaction among subregional offices, national offices and regional economic communities in the intervals between the committees' meetings;

(c) There is practically no follow-up reporting on the implementation of recommendations of previous committees' meetings.

13. As a possible remedy to these and other shortcomings of the intergovernmental committees of experts, the Commission will propose to the next annual meeting of the Conference of Ministers in 2007 that the intergovernmental committees of experts be converted to subregional ministerial meetings. It will be further proposed that these meetings be convened in conjunction with and at the same locations as the meetings of the policy organs of the respective regional economic community of each subregional office. In addition, subregional ministerial caucuses would be held for the five subregions during the annual meetings of the Conference of Ministers to follow through on issues of interest to the different subregions.

IV. A subregional office-driven planning and programming framework for the Economic Commission for Africa

14. One important point raised in the OIOS report is that fostering the subregional offices' role calls for a change in the attitude of Commission headquarters towards them. OIOS also notes that currently there are very limited linkages between the work programmes of the different subregional offices and all Commission subprogrammes. This limits the generation of institutional synergies within Commission programmes including its subregional offices. It is also observed that problems of coordination between subregional offices and Commission headquarters still persist.

15. In line with the new strategy for a stronger field-based approach, the Commission will adopt a subregional office demand-driven planning and programming framework. The programme planning cycle will now begin with an in-house Strategic Framework Note. The Note will set out Commission priorities based primarily on subregional realities and needs as identified by the subregional offices. The Note will be subjected to extensive in-house Commission and subregional office discussions, as well as consultations with key partners to ensure a common understanding of the agreed programme directions, the expected results and the broad strategy for the coming biennium. The preparation of the biennial programme plan would thus be informed by the in-house Note and the discussions on it. During budget years, the Note will indicate the broad activities that the Commission will undertake in the biennium, the expected results and the strategy. These will be based to a large extent on the multi-year programme agreements that each subregional office would have signed with its relevant regional economic communities and had approved by the Commission's legislative organs, as well as other regional, subregional and country-specific needs. The Note would be subjected to the same in-house review and discussions as the biennial programme plan. The preparation of the programme budget would likewise be guided by the Note and these discussions. The programme budget would reflect the detailed activities, outputs, modalities and partnerships for delivery and the distribution of resources by subprogramme.

16. In this model, all Commission subprogrammes will, to a large extent, be responding to subregional needs and priorities. This would be over and above the regional activities that Commission headquarters subprogrammes would be undertaking, as well as the specific subprogrammes that the subregional offices would themselves be implementing in support of subregional development. A revamped Office of Strategic Planning and Programme Management would be responsible for emplacing and managing the model. The model should ensure the required coordination, coherence and synergy in the formulation and implementation of the programmes of the Commission.

V. Improved modalities through enhanced partnerships

17. The modalities through which the subregional offices are to deliver their services will be characterized by strong partnership and networking with other relevant actors. They will also be guided by the need for effective and efficient use of available resources. Specifically, therefore, the subregional offices will be positioned to deliver services along the following lines:

(a) Acting as privileged partners of the regional economic communities: the Commission intends to position the subregional offices as the first port of call for the regional economic communities. In this regard, the subregional offices will act as the communities' privileged partners and will be required to sign partnership agreements with them for multi-year programmes. This arrangement will be implemented in instances where the regional economic community is co-located with a subregional office, as in the case of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and the Arab Maghreb Union. In the case of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Commission intends to post a liaison officer to each one of them to ensure the desired close level of cooperation and collaboration. In addition, the Commission

also intends to post a liaison officer to the APRM secretariat to build on existing Commission support in this area;

(b) Partnering with subregional intergovernmental organizations, including regional and subregional technical cooperation institutions: in furtherance of the Commission's partnership with the African Union and other intergovernmental organizations and its comparative advantage as the United Nations agency best placed to play a vital role at the subregional level, the subregional offices will be required to work closely with the specialized cooperation institutions with the African Union, as well as other subregional agencies that are contributing to meeting Africa's regional integration objectives and its special needs. In doing so, subregional offices will promote and coordinate at the subregional level the contributions of United Nations actions in support of the AU agenda;

(c) Engaging member States through United Nations country teams: United Nations country teams provide an opportunity for subregional offices to engage at the country programme level. The subregional offices would therefore be required to focus on ensuring that regional economic integration issues feature in the different United Nations Development Assistance Framework processes and to work with United Nations country teams to build country capacities for effective participation in regional integration processes and programmes. Subregional offices will also work with United Nations country teams to further the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals from a subregional perspective;

(d) Participating in a joint African Union/African Development Bank/Economic Commission for Africa programme on regional integration: the Commission will propose a joint African Union/African Development Bank/Economic Commission for Africa subregional prospectus on integration to be prepared in cooperation with the regional economic communities, which will reflect the division of labour between the continental organizations and enable donors to buy into subregional activities. Subregional offices would be required to prepare Commission inputs for the prospectus;

(e) Strategic use of regional advisory services: the use of the Commission's Regional Advisers will be reviewed to increase the correlation between their services and the operational needs of the subregional offices. To this end, new guidelines governing the management of Regional Advisory Services will be drawn up to include:

(i) Improved mechanisms for prioritizing the work of Regional Advisers in the context of a subregional office-driven delivery of technical cooperation services;

(ii) Improvements in the programming of work as well as the performance evaluation of Regional Advisers;

(f) Other key partnerships: as the first points of call for subregional and country requests for Commission support as well as the operational channels for the provision of required support from all Commission programmes, subregional offices will build strong partnerships at the country level with national focal points dealing with integration issues, such as ministries of regional integration, in addition to the private sector, civil society organizations and academic and research institutions;

(g) Communications and outreach: the OIOS report notes the lack of a sound subregional office communication and outreach strategy. This is particularly so in countries other than subregional office host countries and leads to the generalized poor visibility of subregional offices and their work. It also suggests the creation of an electronic platform to unite all relevant stakeholders for better coordination and for the sharing and distribution of knowledge. The platform would include the subregional office national focal points in each country in order to facilitate follow-up on issues and the dissemination of information. Since the OIOS report, the Commission has computerized its work in all the subregional offices, taking full advantage of newer information and communication technologies. The capabilities of the subregional offices have also been expanded with the installation of very small aperture terminal (V-SAT) equipment, which provides effective links to Commission headquarters and other United Nations agencies. These arrangements will be used to facilitate networking with delegates from intergovernmental committees of experts and other stakeholders in the respective subregions.

18. In addition to technical improvements, the plan for the overall repositioning of the Commission envisages a comprehensive external communications strategy that involves both a strategic dimension and a service delivery dimension. The strategic dimension places the communications function within the executive direction and management of the institution, while in the service delivery dimension, communications functions are essential elements of the process of knowledge-sharing, consensus building and advocacy. Subregional offices will fit into the overall communications strategy, given their role as first points of contact between the Commission and its clients.

VI. Strengthening the resource base of the subregional offices

19. In order to implement the enhanced mandate of the subregional offices and to enable them to achieve the desired results, they need to be provided with additional resources. Additional resources are required to implement the recommendations made by OIOS involving activities arising out of the repositioning of the Commission. They involve human resources and financial requirements for increased operational activities, improved information and communication technology systems and expanded training opportunities for subregional office staff.

20. The additional posts required in the subregional offices will enable them to carry out their enhanced role, including the implementation and monitoring of the multi-year programmes to be signed with the regional economic communities; deeper engagement with United Nations country teams on issues pertaining to regional integration; and the increased servicing of meetings due to the conversion of intergovernmental committees of experts to subregional ministerial meetings. The Commission repositioning exercise, which took into account the size of each subregion, their specific needs, the workload of the relevant subregional office and the mix of staff expertise and skills, resulted in an increase in the ratio of subregional office staff to Commission headquarters staff. The greater part of Regional Advisory Services resources are to be redeployed to subregional offices while the staffing of subregional offices will be revisited regularly in accordance with changing subregional priorities.

21. Prior to the repositioning exercise, 21.1 per cent of the Commission's human resources were in subregional offices; that percentage has now increased to 22.2 per cent. Ultimately, it is planned to deploy up to 30 per cent of Commission staff to the subregional offices. Annex I to this report contains figures depicting the present and proposed organizational structures of the Commission, together with a table outlining the deployment of staff planned to enhance the subregional offices. In summary, it is proposed to increase the total staffing of the subregional offices by 15 posts (13 professional and 2 local level). Of this total, the two local level and five of the professional posts would be redeployed from within the Commission. The possibility of assigning eight additional posts at the P-4 level to the subregional offices and one at the P-4 level to the Office of the Executive Secretary to coordinate subregional office activity, considered critical to the eventual success of the process, will be addressed in the process of formulating the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009.

22. The additional number and skills mix of human resources required in the subregional offices needs to be matched by increased financial resources from the regular budget and from extrabudgetary resources. At present, a major part of the current limitations faced by the subregional offices arises from the inadequacy of their operational resources. To enable the subregional offices to fulfil their enhanced responsibilities, efforts to redeploy additional non-post resources have commenced and will be pursued throughout the course of the biennium to increase the current average level of about $280,000 per subregional office. These resources would be for the engagement of consultants to help implement specialized aspects of the multi-year programmes; the travel of representatives and staff for an increased number of meetings; the provision of technical assistance; the translation, editing and printing of additional outputs; and further upgrading of the information and communication technology infrastructure in each subregional office.

23. The resources from the regular budget will be complemented by increased extrabudgetary resources. In this regard, the Commission has recently established a budget and management policy committee, which, inter alia, will recommend guidelines for a benchmark allocation of extrabudgetary resources to subregional offices and also enable them to raise their own extrabudgetary resources. The work of this committee would thus address one of the core concerns expressed in the OIOS report, which is that the needs of subregional offices be taken into account in the allocation of extrabudgetary resources.

24. Many of the recommendations made by OIOS are predicated on the operationalization of electronic spaces in the different subregions. Furthermore, subregional offices are expected, within the overall knowledge management and networking strategy of the Commission, to operate as important subregional knowledge management nodes. This would involve the following elements:

(a) Development of web pages: the web page of each subregional office will be re-designed to make them function effectively as dynamic database-driven portals that can support the use of advanced search engines, electronic discussion forums, chat rooms and bulletins boards;

(b) Acquisition of videoconference facilities for liaison offices in regional economic communities: the proposed liaison offices to be located in regional economic communities will need to be provided with videoconferencing facilities to facilitate regular and rapid consultations with subregional offices and Commission headquarters;

(c) Establishment of knowledge networks: dedicated resources must be given to the subregional offices to enable them to play their expected role as nodes in the knowledge management strategy. This will entail their having appropriate tools for the creation of common platforms for storage and retrieval of information, collaborative workspaces, virtual communities of best practices, repositories of lessons learned and databases to track skills and competencies.

25. Presently, each subregional office has been provided with improved information and communication technology facilities and services including VSATs, telephone exchanges, computers and tele/videoconferencing facilities. These facilities are installed and fully functional in every subregional office except the North African subregional office due to its recent move to Rabat. However, the establishment of an effective electronic space in each subregion will require upgrading the subregional information and communication technology infrastructure for each subregional office, including by installing new high-capacity servers and backup systems; replacing computer hardware with newer equipment with multi-media capacities; and, in the operationalization phase, arranging training workshops in the different subregions.

26. The need to increase training opportunities for subregional office staff and the potential role of information and communication technology in this regard were key recommendations by OIOS. Therefore, the repositioning exercise identified the training of Commission staff, including those in subregional offices, as a major requirement for successful implementation of the reforms. The training needs of subregional office staff have accordingly been given priority in the overall Commission training programme, with particular emphasis on strategies and approaches to regional integration, the design and monitoring of complex multi-country projects and the development of subregional frameworks for coordinating United Nations support to NEPAD.

27. The reactivation of the Inter-Divisional Committee on Training, in which subregional offices will be adequately represented, will enable subregional office staff to have increased access to training opportunities. It is nevertheless important to note that the inadequacy of training opportunities for subregional offices is closely linked to the overall inadequacy of resources for training in the Commission. Ensuring greater training opportunities for subregional offices therefore entails increased budgetary provision to the Commission for training and the possible earmarking of specific additional resources for subregional offices.

28. The subregional offices' needs for additional resources derive both from the need to implement the recommendations of OIOS and the reform of the Commission. A conscious effort has therefore been made to reallocate available resources to support the implementation of the increased work programme of subregional offices. Moreover, the few remaining vacant posts are to be rapidly filled as part of the deployment following from the repositioning exercise.

VII. Operational elements

29. The implementation of this action plan will be supported by a number of operational processes including:

(a) Leadership of subregional offices: the leadership of the subregional offices will promote the new vision and mission of the subregional offices in the repositioned Commission to reflect the renewed emphasis being placed on the role

of the subregional offices in their respective subregions. Subregional office Directors will be supported by a senior officer (P-5 level) to be designated as the Deputy Director, and where the subregional office is not in the same location as its relevant regional economic community, another senior officer will be posted as Liaison Officer between the subregional office and the regional economic community;

(b) Decentralization: in order to make the subregional offices more proactive, flexible and responsive to the needs of their clients, consideration was given during the Commission repositioning exercise to decentralizing authority in a number of areas, including recruitment (local staff and consultants) and financial management (medical insurance plan, overtime and procurement). This process will be undertaken in full compliance with United Nations rules and regulations;

(c) Coordination of subregional offices: coordination of the subregional offices will be undertaken within the Office of the Executive Secretary to ensure that the subregional offices receive the required leadership. It will also enable the Executive Secretary and Deputy Executive Secretary to have full oversight of the work being undertaken in these offices and a clear appreciation of any problems or challenges that they are encountering;

(d) Equipment and facilities: subregional offices have recently been provided with improved information and communication technology facilities and services including VSATs, telephone exchanges, computers and teleconferencing facilities. Efforts shall therefore be made to widen the electronic space required for the Commission and its subregional offices to efficiently play their role of knowledge management and exchange centres in each subregion and to be integrated into Commission/United Nations management systems, subsystems, databases and networks. The acquisition and installation of the required equipment are planned within the level of resources currently available to the Commission in the 2006-2007 programme budget. As the enhancement of subregional offices progresses, any needs that cannot be met by means of redeploying existing resources will be addressed in the process of formulating the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009.

VIII. Conclusion

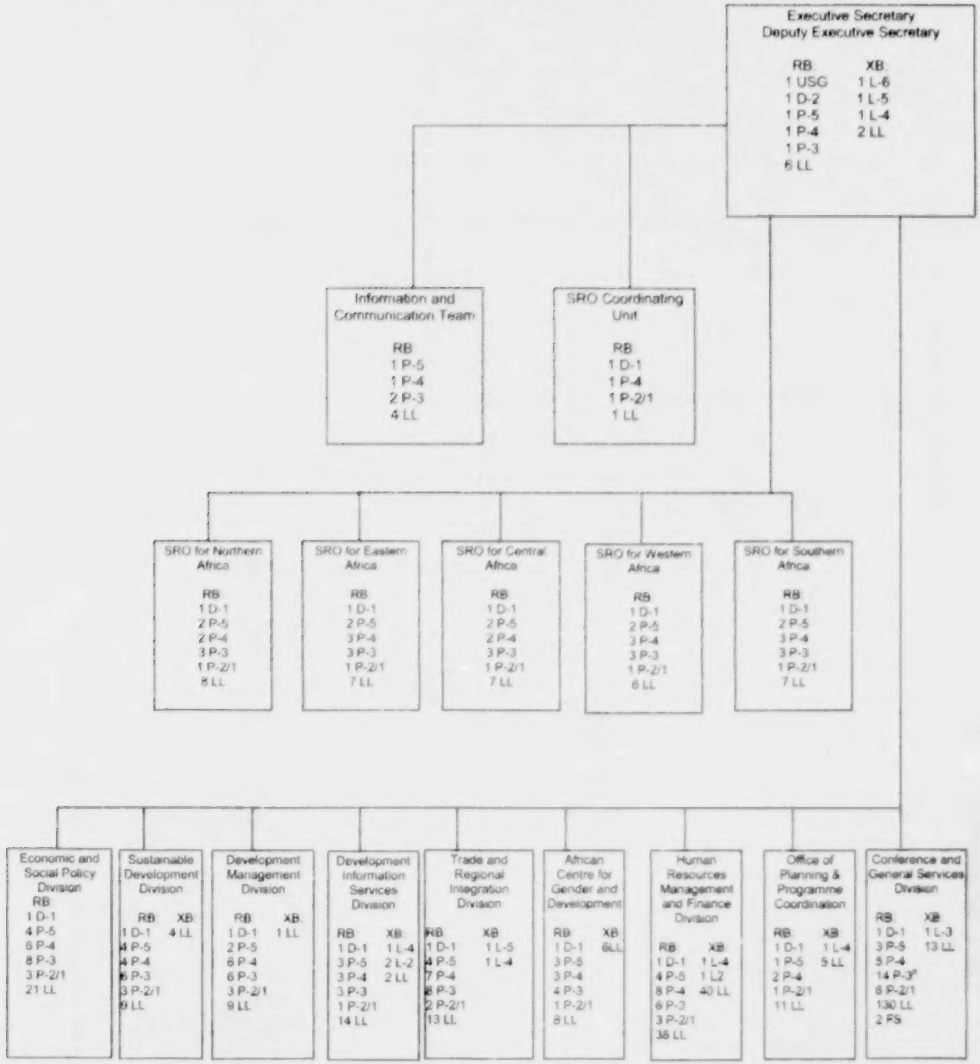
30. Implementation of the issues highlighted in this report will enable the subregional offices to play an enhanced role in a repositioned Commission. Moreover, in response to the recommendations of OIOS, specific actions have been planned and, to the extent possible, implementation has commenced. Both the OIOS recommendations for improving the performance of the subregional offices and the actions to be taken by the Commission in this regard are outlined in annex II to the present document.

31. **The General Assembly may wish to take note of the measures mentioned in this report to initiate the implementation of the recommendations of OIOS and the repositioning of the Commission in order to meet Africa's priorities.**

Annex I

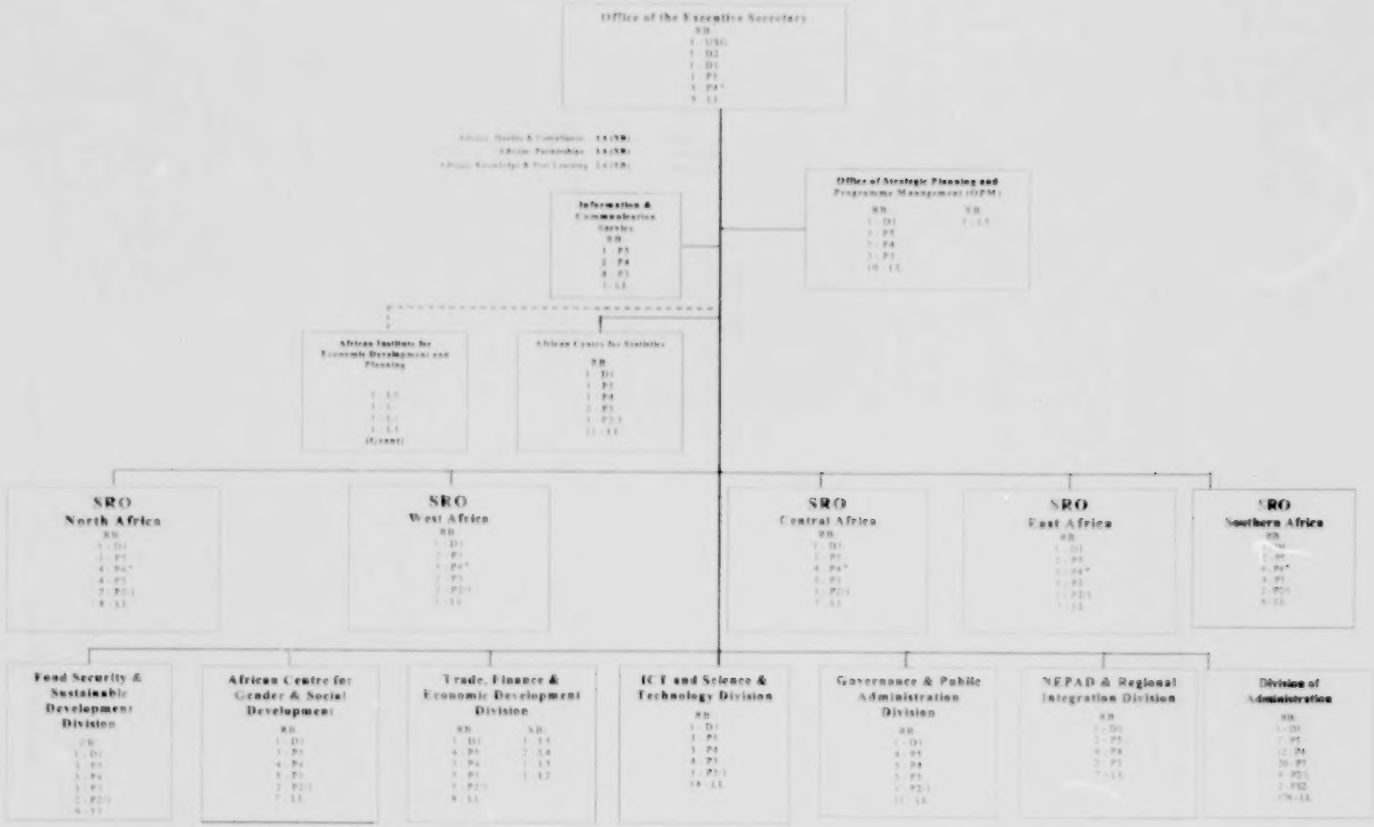
Present and proposed organizational structure of the Economic Commission for Africa and proposed staffing of subregional offices

Economic Commission for Africa: Present organizational structure and post distribution for the biennium 2006-2007


Executive Secretary
Deputy Executive Secretary
RB: 1 USG, 1 D-2, 1 P-5, 1 P-4, 1 P-3, 6 LL
XB: 1 L-6, 1 L-5, 1 L-4, 2 LL
Information and Communication Team
RB: 1 P-5, 1 P-4, 2 P-3, 4 LL
SRO Coordinating Unit
RB: 1 D-1, 1 P-4, 1 P-2/1, 1 LL
SRO for Northern Africa
RB: 1 D-1, 2 P-5, 2 P-4, 3 P-3, 1 P-2/1, 8 LL
SRO for Eastern Africa
RB: 1 D-1, 2 P-5, 3 P-4, 3 P-3, 1 P-2/1, 7 LL
SRO for Central Africa
RB: 1 D-1, 2 P-5, 2 P-4, 3 P-3, 1 P-2/1, 7 LL
SRO for Western Africa
RB: 1 D-1, 2 P-5, 3 P-4, 3 P-3, 1 P-2/1, 6 LL
SRO for Southern Africa
RB: 1 D-1, 2 P-5, 3 P-4, 3 P-3, 1 P-2/1, 7 LL
Economic and Social Policy Division
RB: 1 D-1, 4 P-5, 6 P-4, 8 P-3, 3 P-2/1, 21 LL
Sustainable Development Division
RB: 1 D-1, 4 P-5, 4 P-4, 6 P-3, 3 P-2/1, 9 LL
XB: 4 LL
Development Management Division
RB: 1 D-1, 2 P-5, 6 P-4, 6 P-3, 3 P-2/1, 9 LL
XB: 1 LL
Development Information Services Division
RB: 1 D-1, 3 P-5, 3 P-4, 3 P-3, 1 P-2/1, 14 LL
XB: 1 L-4, 2 L-2, 2 LL
Trade and Regional Integration Division
RB: 1 D-1, 4 P-5, 7 P-4, 6 P-3, 2 P-2/1, 13 LL
XB: 1 L-5, 1 L-4
African Centre for Gender and Development
RB: 1 D-1, 3 P-5, 3 P-4, 4 P-3, 1 P-2/1, 8 LL
XB: 6LL
Human Resources Management and Finance Division
RB: 1 D-1, 4 P-5, 8 P-4, 6 P-3, 3 P-2/1, 38 LL
XB: 1 L-4, 1 L2, 40 LL
Office of Planning & Programme Coordination
RB: 1 D-1, 1 P-5, 2 P-4, 1 P-2/1, 11 LL
XB: 1 L-4, 5 LL
Conference and General Services Division
RB: 1 D-1, 3 P-5, 5 P-4, 14 P-3[a], 6 P-2/1, 130 LL, 2 FS
XB: 1 L-3, 13 LL

[a] Reclassification of one field service post to P-3.

Economic Commission for Africa: proposed organizational structure and post distribution after strengthening subregional offices and repositioning the Commission


Office of the Executive Secretary
Information & Communication Service
Office of Strategic Planning and Programme Management (OPPM)
African Institute for Economic Development and Planning
African Centre for Statistics
SRO North Africa
SRO West Africa
SRO Central Africa
SRO East Africa
SRO Southern Africa
Food Security & Sustainable Development Division
African Centre for Gender & Social Development
Trade, Finance & Economic Development Division
ICT and Science & Technology Division
Governance & Public Administration Division
NEPAD & Regional Integration Division
Division of Administration

[a] New posts (nine new posts for the subregional offices).

Summary of proposed subregional office staff deployment

	Subregional office Northern Africa		*Subregional office Eastern Africa*		*Subregional office Central Africa*		*Subregional office Western Africa*		*Subregional office Southern Africa*		*Total*	
Posts	*Present*	*Proposed*	*Present*	*Proposed*	*Present*	*Proposed*	*Present*	*Proposed*	*Present*	*Proposed*	*Present*	*Proposed*
D-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5
P-5	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	10	8
P-4	2	4	3	5	2	4	3	5	3	4	13	22
P-3	3	4	3	3	3	5	3	2	3	4	15	18
P-2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	5	8
Subtotal	9	12	10	12	9	12	10	12	10	13	48	61
Local level	8	8	7	7	7	7	6	7	7	8	35	37
Total	17	20	17	19	16	19	16	19	17	20	83	98

Annex II

Specific actions to be taken in respect of Office of Internal Oversight Services recommendations

A. Creating an electronic space for networking and information dissemination

Recommendation SP-04-002-001

In order to strengthen the role of intergovernmental committees of experts, subregional offices should undertake a joint initiative, supported by the Economic Commission for Africa headquarters, creating an electronic space to facilitate networking with delegates and wider audiences of stakeholders and practitioners, to expand the electronic distribution of their products and ensure that the outcomes of the meetings of intergovernmental committees of experts reach senior political and executive levels nationally and subregionally (paras. 8-12 of the present report).

Action to be taken

The Commission will work to:

- Establish and operationalize an electronic platform linking each subregional office to country focal points and their corresponding regional economic community
- Provide training for subregional office staff on the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS)
- Establish a comprehensive e-mail list along with a database of experts and institutions
- Ensure that each subregional office launches an electronic newsletter in their subregion
- Incorporate provisions for training and electronic links in the 2008-2009 Programme Budget

Responsibility centres

Subregional offices; Information Systems Section; Office of Strategic Planning and Programme Management; Division of Administration; Regional Economic Communities.

Time frame

Immediate, through 2007.

B. Working for results in accordance with subregional priorities

Recommendation SP-04-002-002

The Commission should develop a separate subprogramme of work for each subregional office in its biennial budgets, so that expected accomplishments and all

other elements of the logical framework should be specific to a subregional office. The Commission should develop a plan that would provide guidance and training to subregional offices on results-based management and the use of IMDIS for programme performance monitoring and reporting (paras. 13-17 of the present report).

Action to be taken

The Commission will work to:

(a) Ensure that subregional offices sign partnership agreements with multi-year programmes with their corresponding regional economic community to ensure that their work programmes are in accordance with subregional priorities;

(b) Organize dedicated IMDIS training for subregional office staff;

(c) Put in place arrangements for subregional office coordination in the Office of the Executive Secretary to ensure effective monitoring of results;

(d) Reflect specific subregional initiatives in the proposed Programme Budget for the 2008-2009 biennium.

Responsibility centres

Office of the Executive Secretary; Information Systems Section; Office of Strategic Planning and Programme Management; Division of Administration; subregional offices

Time frame

Immediate, through 2007.

Subprogramme 7 of the biennial programme plan for 2008-2009 will be revised as follows for consideration by the Committee for Programme Coordination at its forty-seventh session:

Subprogramme 7: subregional activities for development

Objective of the Organization: to strengthen the capacities of member States for regional integration by spearheading the delivery of operational activities targeted at the specific priorities of each of the five subregions within the overall framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.

Component 1

Subregional activities in North Africa

Expected accomplishments	**Indicators of achievement**
(a) Enhanced capacity of member States, the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), the Community of Sahel-Saharan States and other intergovernmental and civil society	(a) (i) Increased number of capacity-building and technical assistance projects provided to member States, regional economic communities,

organizations to formulate and implement harmonized macroeconomic and sectoral policies and programmes to address key subregional development priorities in North Africa, including: water resources development management and utilization; migration, employment and job creation; trade (intra-regional and world trade); and information and communication technology development;	intergovernmental and civil society organizations in the priority areas of the Northern African subregion; (ii) Increased number of beneficiaries from training projects;
(b) Strengthened partnerships at the subregional and country levels to support policy advocacy, policymaking and implementation of subregional integration programmes in North Africa;	(b) (i) Increased number of joint undertakings with major partners at the subregional and country levels, including the United Nations country teams; (ii) Increased dissemination of knowledge, especially the flagship publications, demand-driven studies and policy papers; (iii) Increase in the contribution to and of Commission databases by and to member States;
(c) Strengthened role of the intergovernmental machinery at the subregional level through improved networking among key stakeholders involved in the subregional development agenda, including member States, regional economic communities, civil society organizations and other subregional entities.	(c) Increased dissemination of reports of important meetings and conferences, including the intergovernmental committees of experts and the annual Commission/Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.
Component 2	
Subregional activities in West Africa	
Expected accomplishments	**Indicators of achievement**
(a) Enhanced capacity of member States, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), intergovernmental and civil society organizations to formulate and implement policies and programmes on issues dealing with food security and environmental sustainability; private sector development and investment promotion; employment and poverty reduction; and post-conflict reconstruction, recovery and development;	(a) (i) Increased number of capacity-building and technical assistance projects provided to member States, regional economic communities, intergovernmental and civil society organizations in the priority areas of the Western African subregion; (ii) Increased number of beneficiaries from training projects;

(b) Strengthened partnerships at the subregional and country levels to support policy advocacy, policymaking and implementation of multi-year programmes designed in collaboration with ECOWAS and contribute to the implementation of the existing ones formulated within the framework of NEPAD;	(b) (i) Increased number of joint undertakings with ECOWAS, major partners at the subregional and country levels, including the United Nations country teams; (ii) Increased dissemination of knowledge, especially the flagship publications, demand-driven studies and policy papers; (iii) Increased contribution to and of Commission databases by and to member States;
(c) Strengthened role of the intergovernmental machinery at the subregional level through improved networking among key stakeholders involved in the subregional development agenda, including member States, regional economic communities, civil society organizations and other subregional entities.	(c) Increased dissemination of reports of important meetings and conferences, including the intergovernmental committees of experts and the annual Commission/Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.
Component 3	
Subregional activities in Central Africa	
Expected accomplishments	**Indicators of achievement**
(a) Enhanced capacity of member States, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, intergovernmental and civil society organizations to formulate and implement harmonized macroeconomic and sectoral policies and programmes in the subregional development priority areas, including macroeconomic management; transport and infrastructure development; post-conflict rehabilitation, recovery and development; food security; and information and communication technology development;	(a) (i) Increased number of capacity-building and technical assistance projects provided to member States, regional economic communities, intergovernmental and civil society organizations in the priority areas of the subregion; (ii) Increased number of beneficiaries from training projects;
(b) Strengthened partnerships at the subregional and country levels to support policy advocacy, policymaking and implementation of subregional integration programmes in Central Africa;	(b) (i) Increased number of joint undertakings with major partners at the subregional and country levels, including the United Nations country teams; (ii) Increased dissemination of knowledge, especially the flagship publications, demand-driven studies and policy papers;

	(iii) Increased contribution to and of Commission databases by and to member States;
(c) Strengthened role of the intergovernmental machinery at the subregional level through improved networking among key stakeholders involved in the subregional development agenda, including member States, regional economic communities, civil society organizations and other subregional entities.	(c) Increased dissemination of reports of important meetings and conferences, including the intergovernmental committees of experts and the annual Commission/Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

Component 4

Subregional activities in Eastern Africa

Expected accomplishments	**Indicators of achievement**
(a) Enhanced capacity of member States, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the Indian Ocean Commission, intergovernmental and civil society organizations to formulate and implement harmonized macroeconomic and sectoral policies and programmes in the priority areas such as food security, land and environment; transport, energy, lake/river basin development; macroeconomic management, gender and youth employment and the development and utilization of information and communication technology;	(a) (i) Increased number of capacity-building and technical assistance projects provided to member States, regional economic communities, intergovernmental and civil society organizations in the priority areas of the Eastern African subregion; (ii) Increased number of beneficiaries from training projects;
(b) Strengthened partnerships at the subregional and country levels to support policy advocacy, policymaking and implementation of subregional integration programmes in Eastern Africa;	(b) (i) Increased number of joint undertakings with major partners at the subregional and country levels, including the United Nations country teams; (ii) Increased dissemination of knowledge, especially the flagship publications, demand-driven studies and policy papers; (iii) Increased contribution to and of Commission databases by and to member States;
(c) Strengthened role of the intergovernmental machinery at the subregional level through improved networking among key stakeholders involved in the subregional development agenda including member States, regional economic communities, civil society organizations and other subregional entities.	(c) Increased dissemination of reports of important meetings and conferences, including the intergovernmental committees of experts and the annual Commission/Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

Component 5

Subregional activities in Southern Africa

Expected accomplishments	Indicators of achievement
(a) Enhanced capacity of member States, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), intergovernmental and civil society organizations to formulate and implement harmonized macroeconomic and sectoral policies and programmes dealing with subregional development priorities, including food security; intra-subregional trade, infrastructure/mineral resources development; industrial development; gender, youth and employment; and HIV/AIDS;	(a) (i) Increased number of capacity-building and technical assistance projects provided to member States, SADC, intergovernmental and civil society organizations in the priority areas of the subregion; (ii) Increased number of beneficiaries from training projects;
(b) Strengthened partnerships at the subregional and country levels to support policy advocacy, policymaking and implementation of multi-year programmes with key partners and stakeholders including SADC, the NEPAD secretariat and the Development Bank of Southern Africa;	(b) (i) Increased number of joint undertakings with major partners at the subregional and country levels, including the United Nations country teams; (ii) Increased dissemination of knowledge, especially the flagship publications, demand-driven studies and policy papers; (iii) Increased contribution to and of Commission databases by member States;
(c) Strengthened role of the intergovernmental machinery at the subregional level through improved networking among key stakeholders involved in the subregional development agenda including member States, regional economic communities, civil society organizations and other subregional entities.	(c) Increased dissemination of reports of important meetings and conferences, including the intergovernmental committees of experts and the annual Commission/Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

C. Improved coordination between Economic Commission for Africa headquarters and subregional offices

Recommendation SP-04-002-003

Guidelines defining coordination mechanisms regarding subregional offices and Commission headquarters should be officially issued. The Executive Secretary of the Commission should take immediate measures to revitalize the functions of the former Coordination Unit at the Commission's headquarters as well as to clarify and re-energize the supervision and coordination arrangements regarding subregional offices. Relevant information and communication technology tools such as bulletin boards and discussion forums should be developed to enhance such coordination

arrangements. The previous recommendations of the Coordination Unit should be fully implemented without delay (paras. 18-21 of the present report).

Action to be taken

The Commission will initiate action to:

- Position the coordination of subregional offices in the Office of the Executive Secretary and ensure regular consultation between them and Commission headquarters
- Delegate specified administrative and support processes to subregional offices
- Update intranet and VSAT links between its headquarters and subregional offices
- Improve the Commission website and ensure that it fully reflects the work of the subregional offices
- Integrate subregional offices into management processes and decision forums such as the Senior Management Committee and Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Matters

Responsibility centres

Office of the Executive Secretary; subregional offices; Division of Administration — Information Systems Section; Office of Strategic Planning and Programme Management.

Time frame

Immediate, through 2007.

D. Role of regional advisers in subregional office work

Recommendation SP-04-002-004

The Commission should conduct an overall review of the function of regional advisers to ensure that their expertise and deployment are in accord with the needs of member States and subregional offices. Commission headquarters, in cooperation with subregional offices, should establish a mechanism for monitoring the results of the missions of regional advisers and for sharing lessons learned and best practices identified by regional advisers (paras. 22-23 of the present report).

Action to be taken

The Commission will act to:

- Re-profile the Regional Advisory Services to adapt its expertise to the identified priorities of member States
- Locate more than half of the Regional Advisory posts to subregional offices
- Involve subregional office Directors in the review of the work of regional advisers

- Prepare and disseminate information to its client on the skills available in its Regional Advisory Services
- Include information on available Advisory Services on its website
- Include subregional offices in recruitment panels for regional advisers

Responsibility centres

Office of the Executive Secretary; subregional offices; Division of Administration — Information Systems Section.

Time frame

Beginning of 2007.

E. Utilizing mission reports in knowledge management processes

Recommendation SP-04-002-005

The mission reporting system should be modernized to become an effective tool for information and knowledge sharing. It should be equipped with a search engine and facilities for producing summary and thematic reports. Guidelines on its use should be issued by the Office of Policy and Programmed Coordination and adherence to them strictly monitored (para. 24 of the present report).

Action to be taken

The Commission will take action to:

- Establish guidelines and format for mission reporting
- Establish an electronic site for mission reports
- Ensure that subregional offices report on missions according to the guidelines

Responsibility centres

Office of Strategic Planning and Programme Management Programme Divisions; subregional offices; Division of Administration — Information Systems Section.

Time frame

Immediate, through 2007.

F. Allocation of extrabudgetary resources

Recommendation SP-04-002-006

The Executive Secretary should, without delay:

(a) Establish an advisory committee for the allocation of extrabudgetary resources on which subregional offices should be represented. Its terms of reference should provide transparent arrangements and procedures for requesting, prioritizing, reviewing, allocating, monitoring, reporting and evaluating the use of extrabudgetary funds. The committee should see to it that subregional offices should

be allocated no less than a quarter of the total extrabudgetary funds of the Commission;

(b) Develop guidelines for subregional office fund-raising in the subregions and encourage them to undertake it in close consultation with ECA headquarters;

(c) Strengthen the operational capacity of subregional offices (paras. 28-30 of the present report).

Action to be taken

The Commission will take action as follows:

- A budget and management policy committee will be established arising from the Commission repositioning exercise. Among other things, it will be responsible for oversight of extrabudgetary resources
- Two subregional office Directors will serve on this committee on a rotating basis to ensure that subregional office interests are taken into account

Responsibility centres

Office of the Executive Secretary; Office of Strategic Planning and Programme Management; subregional offices.

Time frame

Immediate.

G. Strengthening subregional office staffing and staff mix

Recommendation SP-04-002-007

The Executive Secretary of the Commission should prepare a realistic plan of action aimed at further strengthening subregional office staffing and aligning staff skills profiles and operational expertise with the specific needs of the subregions. Mobility arrangements should be part of such a plan. A periodic assessment of the needs and workload of the different subregions must be carried out as a matter of course and followed up by appropriate executive action (paras. 31-33 of the present report).

Action to be taken

The Commission will take action on this recommendation as follows:

- Increase the allocation of regular budget and extrabudgetary posts to subregional offices
- Initiate a staff redeployment plan from Commission headquarters to subregional offices
- Ensure that the increase in staff to subregional offices is commensurate with their needs
- Ensure that mix of staff skills available in each subregional office is in accordance with identified subregional priorities

Responsibility centres

Office of the Executive Secretary; Office of Strategic Planning and Programme Management.

Time frame

End 2006 and in the context of the preparation of the 2008-2009 programme budget.

H. Better integration of United Nations agencies in the subregions

Recommendation SP-04-002-008

(a) In order to strengthen collaboration with its United Nations partners, Commission headquarters, together with the subregional offices, should develop a new approach to facilitating the integration activities of the entities of the United Nations system in subregions based on the various information and communication technology instruments allowing electronic space for discussions and coordination. One example of such an undertaking could be to advocate and establish a regional protocol whereby all United Nations organizations agree to use a common statistical database administered by the subregional office for developing programmes and evaluating progress on the Millennium Development Goals in the subregion;

(b) Commission headquarters should define and publicize as a matter of course the meaningful and actionable role of subregional offices in all its major initiatives (paras. 35-39 of the present report).

Action to be taken

The Commission will take action to:

- Consult with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on areas of cooperation at the subregional level
- Consult with regional offices of United Nations agencies on major subregional, regional initiatives and areas for common programmes
- Facilitate the establishment of a consultative platform for United Nations agencies with regional programmes and offices
- Facilitate the revitalization of the annual United Nations agencies coordination meeting and have these issues as an agenda item
- Strengthen capacities for the generation of statistics and development information, including by subregional offices
- Create a quarterly electronic brief on major subregional office activities, including subregional initiatives

Responsibility centres

Office of the Executive Secretary; Office of Strategic Planning and Programme Management.

Time frame

Immediate, through 2007.

I. Subregional office support to regional economic communities in implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development

Recommendation SP-04-002-009

Subregional offices should analyse the needs of the secretariats of regional economic communities for support in implementing NEPAD, define the Commission headquarters support that they can rely on in that regard and reach a clear understanding on the division of labour with the NEPAD secretariat. Based on that, subregional offices should develop practical medium-term plans of action in providing support to regional economic communities (para. 40 of the present report).

Action to be taken

The Commission will act on this recommendation as follows:

- Elaborate multi-year programmes of cooperation with the regional economic communities, taking NEPAD objectives into account
- Post liaison officers to regional economic communities secretariat
- Post a liaison officer to the NEPAD and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) secretariat
- Organize a biannual consultative meeting between the Executive Secretary, subregional office Directors, Executive Heads of regional economic communities and NEPAD and APRM secretariats

Responsibility centres

Office of the Executive Secretary; Office of Strategic Planning and Programme Management; subregional offices.

Time frame

Immediate, through 2007.

J. Communications strategy for subregional offices

Recommendation SP-04-002-010

The Commission should, without delay, take the following steps:

(a) Subregional offices and Commission headquarters should jointly develop a coherent and realistic outreach and communication strategy for subregions, including a clear understanding of the target audience for outputs and services and the most efficient and effective electronic means for disseminating information and for obtaining and analysing feedback from users. The stakeholders should take part in the development of the strategy;

(b) Communication officers should be redeployed to the subregional offices to strengthen their outreach capacity. They should be in charge of fine-tuning and implementing the communication strategy of each subregional office, in close collaboration with other United Nations offices in the subregion. The Commission should provide adequate extrabudgetary funding to implement the strategy;

(c) Subregional offices' websites should be radically redesigned to host comprehensive and current political, economic and social information on the subregion originating from the Commission, other United Nations agencies, member States, intergovernmental organizations and regional economic communities with a view to positioning subregional offices as the leading sources of essential subregional data and information and making them active participants in United Nations country teams without necessarily having a physical presence in every country. The design of the websites should allow them to serve as the one-stop access to diverse and comprehensive information on subregions. Other information and communication technology tools such as bulletin boards and discussion forums and databases of stakeholders and partners should be expeditiously developed with the support of Commission headquarters to improve subregional offices' networking and outreach capacity (paras. 41-47 of the present report).

Action to be taken

The action to be taken by the Commission includes:

- The elaboration of a communications strategy for subregional offices with comprehensive subregional components
- Improvement in subregional office websites to make them knowledge platforms, including on issues of regional integration and subregional priorities and initiatives
- Designation of responsibility centres for communications issues in subregional offices

Responsibility centres

Office of the Executive Secretary; Information and Communication Service; subregional offices; Information Systems Section.

Time frame

End 2006.

K. Managerial oversight and administrative support to subregional offices

Recommendation SP-04-002-011

Commission headquarters should review, jointly with subregional offices, managerial oversight of and administrative support to them in line with the suggestions in paragraphs 48-49 of the report of the Secretary-General on enhancing the role of subregional offices and implement them shortly (paras. 48-49 of the present report).

Action to be taken

The Commission will act to:

- Finalize the operational guidelines and implementation of the proposed delegation of authority to subregional offices
- Request United Nations Headquarters for administrative approval to delegate some key processes
- Enhance the status of subregional office Administrative Officers
- Provide training to subregional office Administrative and Finance Officers to improve their knowledge and effectiveness as well as the quality of their work

Responsibility centres

Office of the Executive Secretary; Division of Administration; subregional offices.

Time frame

End 2006.

L. Evaluation of subregional offices

Recommendation SP-04-002-012

Commission headquarters should develop a plan of evaluation and self-evaluation of the work of subregional offices and consistently implement it. Periodic and comprehensive surveys of stakeholders should be conducted. Training in methods of evaluation and self-evaluation should be arranged by the Office of Policy and Programme Coordination (para. 50 of the present report).

Action to be taken

The Commission will act to:

- Develop a plan for the periodic evaluation of subregional offices
- Help subregional offices to develop a logic framework for results-based budgeting
- Make resources available for monitoring and evaluation
- Train subregional offices staff on evaluation methods
- Recruit monitoring and evaluation experts to prepare evaluations and train subregional office staff

Responsibility centres

Office of Strategic Planning and Project Management; subregional offices.

Time frame

2006-2007.

M. Training of subregional office staff

Recommendation SP-04-002-013

The Commission should establish a transparent, participatory and equitable mechanism for providing training to subregional offices. It should include a core catalogue of training opportunities and the optimal decentralization of training funds and reflect subregional priorities. Basic elements of training management such as annual plans, appraisal of training received and keeping staff training records must be put in place. Group training, distance electronic training and joint training with other United Nations entities should be encouraged (paras. 51-52 of the present report).

Action to be taken

The Commission will act to:

- Include subregional offices in the global assessment of training needs
- Allocate adequate resources for training of subregional office staff

Responsibility centres

Office of Programme Coordination; Division of Administration — Human Resources Services Section; subregional offices.

Time frame

2006-2007.

N. Relocation of the subregional office in North Africa to Rabat

Recommendation SP-04-002-014

Based on the commitment of the Government of Morocco, the subregional office in North Africa should take proactive practical measures to relocate to Rabat by the end of 2005 (para. 53 of the present report).

Action to be taken

The Commission has acted as follows: the subregional office in North Africa was relocated to Rabat in 2005.

Responsibility centres

Commission headquarters; subregional office in North Africa; Government of Morocco.

Time frame

Completed.